



# Islamic Online University

# The Three Shelters

A Commentary on Chapters  
112, 113 & 114 of the Qur'aan  
[Also Known as the Three Quls]

By

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## Module 1

تفسير سورة الإخلاص

# Tafseer Soorah al-Ikhlaas

## Verse 1

# TAFSEER SOORAH IKHLAAS (112)

## Name of the Soorah

This chapter is most commonly known by the title *Soorah al-Ikhlaas* (The Chapter on Sincerity) from the phrase أَخْلَصَ لِلَّهِ *akhlaṣa lillaahi* (to be without hypocrisy towards God, to be sincere towards God [Qaamoos of al-Fayroozabaadee]) or the term *ikhlaas* properly signifies the assertion of oneself to be clear of believing in any beside God [Taaj al-‘Aroos of Murtaḍaa az-Zabedee].<sup>1</sup> However, it was also sometimes referred to as *Soorah at-Tawḥeed* (The Chapter on Monotheism) by early scholars. In many statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions, this chapter was most commonly referred to by the whole first verse *Qul huwAllaahu aḥad*. However, this variation in the names does not in any way indicate changes or contradictions within the Qur’aan because the majority of chapter titles were chosen by the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) and scholars of later generations for identification purposes.

There are, however, a few chapters which the Prophet (ﷺ) referred to by titles. For example, the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter was commonly called *Soorah al-Kahf* (The Cave). AbuDardaa related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

((مَنْ حَفِظَ عَشْرَ آيَاتٍ مِنْ أَوَّلِ سُورَةِ الْكَهْفِ عُصِمَ مِنَ الدَّجَالِ))

“Anyone who memorizes the first ten verses of Soorah al-Kahf will be protected from Dajjaal.”<sup>2</sup>

It was not until the third century after the *hijrah* (ninth century C.E.) that people began the practice of writing chapter names in the Qur’aan, numbering the verses and adding symbols in the margin indicating the divisions of the Qur’aan.<sup>3</sup>

There were also symbols indicating the ends of the verses and places for recitational pauses (such as ط and لا). Most scholars of that time were initially opposed to these additions fearing that their widespread acceptance might lead to these symbols being considered a part of the Qur’aan in later times.

<sup>1</sup> *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 786

<sup>2</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 2, pp. 386-7, no. 1766. Also collected by at-Tirmithi, Abou Daawood, and an-Nasaa’ee. However in at-Tirmithi’s authentic narration the text read, “Whoever memorizes three verses from the beginning of al-Kahf...”

<sup>3</sup> E.g. the thirtieth part called *Juz*, or a section called *Rukoo’* indicated by an ‘Ayn (ع).

Al-Halleemee, one of the major Qur'aanic scholars of that time said:

“Writing in the tenths and fifths<sup>4</sup>, names of the chapters and the numbers of the verses are all despised, based on Ibn Mas‘ood’s statement, ‘Free the Qur’aan from any additions.’ However, vowel marks,<sup>5</sup> are allowed because they do not have form similar to that of the text of the Qur’aan. They are only necessary indications of correct pronunciation and their presence does no harm.”<sup>6</sup>

In time, however, the opposition of the early scholars was overwhelmed by the will of the masses and such additions became common place.

## The Reason for Revelation

The Qur’aan is a book of guidance for all peoples in all times until the Day of Judgment, showing them the correct path in their relations with their Creator and in their relations with themselves as individuals and as groups. At the same time, the Qur’aan was revealed to one man living in a specific time and place among a specific community. On occasions, certain events would occur about which the Prophet’s followers were unsure, or on other occasions they might actually ask him about some matters which were unclear to them. In response to these and similar needs, verses were revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ). These events represent the context in which revelation came and are referred to as “*asbaab an-nuzool*” (reasons for revelation). The Qur’aan, therefore, used particular incidents to give instructions of universal significance.

The circumstances for a particular revelation could only be known to the witnesses of the relevant events or someone who was informed by a witness.

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<sup>4</sup> I.e. a tenth portion of the Qur’aan and a fifth portion of the Qur’aan.

<sup>5</sup> The grammarian, Abul-Aswad ad-Du‘alee (d. 638 CE) was reported to have suggested to the fourth Caliph, ‘Alee, that signs indicating vowelling be included in order to avoid mispronunciation of the Qur’aan which could easily lead to the distortion of its meanings. The marks which he developed are not the same as those used today. The *Fat-hah* (vowel “a”) was indicated by a dot above the beginning of the letter; *Kasrah* (vowel “e” or “i”) was indicated by a dot below the beginning of the letter and *Dammah* (vowel “u”) was indicated by a dot at the end of the letter. (*Mabaahith fee ‘Uloom al-Qur’aan*, pp. 150-151)

<sup>6</sup> *Mabaahith fee ‘Uloom al-Qur’aan*, pp. 150-153.

Therefore, the only reliable source for this knowledge is the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). Like the *hadeeths* of the Prophet (ﷺ), the reliability of such reports depends upon the reliability of the chain of narrators. The statement of a student of the companions (*taabi'ee*) about the reason for a given revelation is usually considered weak by the scholars of *hadeeth*, if he did not attribute his opinion to one of the *sahaabah*.<sup>7</sup>

Knowledge of the reasons for revelation is of great importance to understanding the Qur'aan, as well as many of the Islaamic laws contained in it. The following are some of the benefits which may be gained from knowledge of the reasons for a verse's revelation:

1. The reasons for revelation often explain the wisdom underlying the legislation of Islaamic laws. Knowledge of the wisdom behind divine laws provides scholars with general principles which enable them to work out laws for new problems which have similar causes or effects. The reasons for revelation also show the concern of the laws for the general welfare of humanity in their treatment of problems. This, in turn, makes us aware of Allaah's Mercy, which is a fundamental part of all divine laws.
2. Sometimes the reasons for revelation specify the particular aspect of a verse's meaning which was intended. This is of particular importance in cases where the obvious meaning of the verse may be general enough to include circumstances not intended by Allaah.
3. The reason for revelation sometimes clarifies the laws which may be deduced from the verses. The obvious meaning of the verse may imply a particular law, whereas the circumstances under which the verse was revealed indicate another law. For example, 'Urwah once said to his aunt 'Aa'ishah, wife of the Prophet (ﷺ), "Do you know the verse, **'Indeed Safaa and Marwah are among Allaah's shrines, so there is no sin on anyone who walks between them when making hajj or 'umrah'?**'"<sup>8</sup> I don't feel that there is any sin on one who doesn't walk between them." 'Aa'ishah replied, "My nephew! What a terrible thing you have said! Indeed, if the (verse) meant as you interpreted it, it would have been, 'So there is so sin on anyone who doesn't walk between them.' It was revealed

<sup>7</sup> See *Principles of Islaamic Islamic Jurisprudence*, p.39.

<sup>8</sup> The Arabic text of this verse (*Soorah al-Baqarah*, 2: 158) is:

﴿إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا﴾

because the Anṣaar,<sup>9</sup> before Islaam, used to dedicate their (hajj or ‘umrah) to two idols, Isaaf and Naa’ilah, and they would visit them on the seashore before walking between Safaa and Marwah and shaving their heads. After they became Muslims they didn’t want to walk between them, because of what they used to do during the Days of Ignorance. Consequently, Allaah revealed the verse, **‘Indeed Safaa and Marwah are among the shrines of Allaah...’**<sup>10</sup> Thus, although the obvious meaning of the verse indicated that the walking between Mounts Safaa and Marwah was merely *mubaah* (allowable), the reason for revelation indicates that it is *waajib* (compulsory).

Qur’aanic verses may be general or specific in their meanings and the reasons for revelation may either confirm the general implications of the verses or their specific implications, or it may qualify them. The guiding principle to be followed when interpreting or applying the verses of the Qur’aan is that ***the lesson lies in the general meaning of the words and not simply in the special circumstances in which they were revealed***. However, knowledge of the events surrounding the revelations puts the general meaning of the verses in their proper context and helps to prevent deviant interpretation.

### The Reason for the Revelation of Soorah al-Ikhlaas

There is one authentic narration indicating the circumstances under which this chapter was revealed. The Prophet’s (ﷺ) follower, Ubayy ibn Ka’b<sup>11</sup>, related that some of the pagans asked Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) to list the lineage of his Lord so Allaah revealed: “Say: He Allaah is Unique, Allaah is Self-Sufficient.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, the chapter was revealed specifically to clarify the uniqueness of Allaah for idol worshippers in the Prophet’s (ﷺ) time who believed that their gods had fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. However, the chapter’s presentation of Allaah’s Unique Unity remains in clear opposition to all expressions of *shirk* in Allaah’s Names and Attributes which have appeared down through the ages. It challenges all false religions in the world today, whether they are deviations from

<sup>9</sup> Literally, “The Helpers.” Islaamically, it refers to the Muslims of Madeenah, who gave the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions refuge when they fled Makkah.

<sup>10</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 2, p. 644, no. 2923.

<sup>11</sup> In Madeenah, the most noted school of *tafseer* was that of Ubayy ibn Ka’b, who was considered by most of his contemporaries as the top reciter of the Qur’aan. Ubayy was also the first person chosen by the Prophet (ﷺ) to record the revelation of the Qur’aan.

<sup>12</sup> *Sunan at-Tirmithi*, Kitaab Tafseer; Baab: wa min soorah al Ikhlaas, *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 5, p. 133. Authenticated in *al-Jaami’ li Ahkaam al-Qur’aan*, vol. 20, p. 194.

the original divine messages, like Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism, or those that appear to be completely man-made religions like, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.

## Place of Revelation

There are no authentic *hadeeths* which clearly indicate where this chapter was revealed. However, most scholars of *Tafseer* (Qur'aanic exegesis) hold that it was among the early chapters revealed in Makkah [prior to the Hijrah] as it has most of the characteristics of the *makkan revelations*. Ibn Mas'ood<sup>13</sup>, 'Aṭaa, 'Ikrimah and Jaabir were among the early generations of scholars who were of that opinion. On the other hand, Ibn 'Abbaas<sup>14</sup>, in one of his opinions, considered it to be from the Madeenan period and so did Qataadah, ad-Dahhaak and as-Suddee.<sup>15</sup>

## The Virtues of the Soorah

This chapter is popular among Muslims due to the many special merits associated with reading it according to various authentic statements of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ):

<sup>13</sup> In 'Iraq, Ibn Mas'ood headed the most prominent school of *tafseer*. 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood, the sixth person to enter Islaam, was among the top reciters of the Qur'aan. The Prophet (pr) himself praised his recitation saying, "Whoever wishes to recite the Qur'aan in the tender manner in which it was revealed should recite it as Ibn Umm 'Abd (Ibn Mas'ood) does." (Ahmad, Ibn Maajah (vol. 1, p. 77, no. 138), al-Haakim and others and authenticated in *Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer*, vol. 2, p. 1034.) As for his knowledge of *tafseer*, Ibn Mas'ood said, "By the One besides Whom there is no other god, I know where and why every verse of Allaah's book was revealed." (*Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1312, no. 6023) Among the many students of Ibn Mas'ood who later became scholars in their own right were al-Hasan al-Basree, 'Alqamah ibn Qays, Masrooq, al-Aṣwad ibn Yazeed, and 'Aamir ash-Sha'bee.

<sup>14</sup> In Makkah, the *tafseer* school of Ibn 'Abbaas became the most prominent. 'Abdullaah ibn 'Abbaas was considered to be the greatest *tafseer* scholar among the *sahaaabah*. He reported that once the Prophet (pr) hugged him and prayed for him as follows :“(“O Allaah, give him a deep understanding of the religion and make him skilled in its interpretation.” (Collected by Ahmad (*al-Musnad*, no. 2274)). A version mentioning only the first half of the Prophet's supplication on his behalf is reported in *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 106, no. 145, and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, pp. 1320-1, no. 6055.) The most famous students of Ibn 'Abbaas were Mujaahid ibn Jabr, 'Ikrimah (the freed slave of Ibn 'Abbaas), Sa'eed ibn Jubayr, Taawoos ibn Keesaan al-Yamaanee, and 'Aṭaa ibn Abee Rabaah. (*Al-Itqaan fee 'Uloom al-Qur'aan*, vol. 2, p. 242. It is interesting to note that all of these great scholars were former slaves.)

<sup>15</sup> *Al-Jaami' li Ahkaam al-Qur'aan*, vol. 20, p. 193.



## 1. It Earns Allaah's Love

'Aa'ishah related that the Prophet (ﷺ) sent a man as leader of a troupe and he used to lead them in prayer. However, he would complete his Qur'anic recitation in prayer with "Say: He Allaah is Unique." When the group returned, they mentioned it to the Prophet (ﷺ) and he told them to ask him why he did that. When he was asked, he replied, "Because it is the description of ar-Rahmaan (The Beneficent), and I love to recite it." The Prophet (ﷺ) told them:

(( أَخْبِرُوهُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يُحِبُّهُ ))

*"Inform him that Allaah loves him."*<sup>16</sup>

This does not mean that the mere recitation of this chapter after every Qur'aanic recitation in prayer will automatically earn Allaah's Love. Were that the case, the Prophet (ﷺ) would not have asked the man about his reasons for doing so. The fact that he asked indicates that it was his intention which mattered, in keeping with the general prophetic principle, *"Deeds are judged according to the intentions behind them."*<sup>17</sup> Because the man understood that the chapter was a divine description of the Creator which caused him to love reciting it, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) judged that such an intention would earn him Allaah's Love. Therefore, in order for the repeated recitation of this chapter to earn Allaah's Love, one must contemplate its meanings and be driven by their impact on his soul to love its recitation. It is the love of the Words of Allaah based on an understanding of their meaning, and not based solely on the beauty of a reciter's voice, which earns Allaah's Love. This principle is not restricted to this chapter but is applicable to the whole of the Qur'aan.

<sup>16</sup> *Sahih Al Bukhari*, vol. 9, p. 287, no. 7375, *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 2, p. 388, no. 1773,

<sup>17</sup> The relevant text is:

عُمَرُ بْنُ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَلَى الْمَنْبَرِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ ((إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهَا)).

"[Surely] actions are judged[solely] by their intentions and everyone will be rewarded according to his intention. Thus, whose migration was for Allaah and His Messenger, his migration was for Allaah and His messenger, and whose migration was to achieve some worldly benefit or to take a woman in marriage, his migration was for whatever he migrated." (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol.1, p.1, no.1 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol.3, p.1056, no.4692.)

## 2. A Way to Paradise

Anas ibn Maalik related that a man from the Ansaar (Muslims of Madeenah) used to lead the people in prayer at the Qubaa Mosque and begin all of his recitations with “Say: He Allaah is Unique,” to the end of the chapter, then recite another chapter. He did this in every unit of prayer. Those with him complained saying, “You begin the prayer with this chapter and you think it isn’t sufficient for you unless you recited another chapter with it. Either recite it or leave it and recite another chapter instead of it.” He replied, “I will not stop doing it. If you want me to lead the prayers, I will do this, and if you don’t like it, I will stop leading you.” They considered him the best among them to lead the prayer and did not want anyone else to lead them. [So they allowed him to continue.] When the Prophet (ﷺ) came to visit them, they informed him of his practice and he asked him, “*O so-and-so! What prevents you from doing what your companions request of you and what makes you stick to this chapter in every unit of prayer?*” He replied, “Indeed, I love it.” The Prophet (ﷺ) commented:

(( حُبُّكَ إِيَّاهَا أَذْخَلَكَ الْجَنَّةَ ))

*“Your love of it will cause you to enter Paradise.”*<sup>18</sup>

This narration should be understood in the light of the commentary on the one before it. The repeated recitation of Soorah al-Ikhlaas after every Qur’aanic recitation in formal prayers will not earn the doer paradise by itself. That is evident because the Prophet (ﷺ) asked the individual why he did it. Going along with the needs and wishes of the congregation was something which the Prophet (ﷺ) stressed as important for the Imaam. There had to be a good reason for it to be acceptable for him to go against their wishes. So, the Prophet (ﷺ) questioned him. When it was explained that it was a result of his deep love of the chapter, the Prophet (ﷺ) promised him Paradise for his sincere love.

It should be noted that both of these authentic narrations confirm the permissibility of reciting more than one chapter or section of the Qur’aan in a single unit of prayer.

It should also be noted from this narration that when complaints are raised, they should be brought back to the sources of Islaam for decision as Allaah said:

<sup>18</sup> *Sahih Al Bukhari* Kitaab: Athaan; Baab: Jama’ bayna sooratayn fee rak’ah

﴿فَإِنْ تَنَزَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ﴾

**“If you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allaah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allaah and in the Last Day.” (Soorah an-Nisaa, 4: 59)**

Furthermore, the Prophet’s way of handling this situation indicates that those to whom complaints are raised should find out from the other party why they did as they did, before jumping to a conclusion and ruling against them.

Why did the Prophet (ﷺ) only promise the man Allaah’s Love in the previous narration and promise this man Paradise? Was it because the man recited Soorah al-Ikhlaas after the chapters in the first case and before the chapters in this case? Of course not! Could the man in the second case enter Paradise without Allaah’s Love? Furthermore, would Allaah put those whom He loves in Hell? The reality is that the attainment of Allaah’s Love is an affirmation of Paradise and the promise of Paradise is an affirmation of Allaah’s Love.

In another narration Aboo Hurayrah stated that he went out with the Prophet (ﷺ) and they heard a man reciting, “Say: He, Allaah, is Unique,” so he said, “*It has become obligatory*,” Aboo Hurayrah asked, “What is obligatory?” and he replied, “*Paradise*.”<sup>19</sup>

Why did Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) not ask this man about his intentions as he did in the previous two narrations? Was it because there were complaints in the previous two cases? Does this indicate that the recitation of this chapter is sufficient to guarantee the reciter Paradise? Could the Prophet (ﷺ) promise anyone Paradise based on his own opinion?

In this instance, Jibreel informed the Prophet (ﷺ) that due to the sincerity with which the man recited this chapter and his sincerity regarding his religion as a whole, he would be among the people of Paradise. Thus, there was no need of finding out his intentions, as in the previous cases.

<sup>19</sup> *Sunan at-Tirmitheh*, Kitaab: Fadaa’il al Qur’aan, Baab: Maa jaa’a fee Soorah al Ikhlaas.

### 3. One Third of the Qur'aan

Aboo Sa'eed al-Khudree narrated that a man heard another repeating the recitation of "Say: He Allaah is Unique," over and over in the night. When the morning came, he went to the Prophet (ﷺ) and mentioned it to him in a belittling fashion. So, the Prophet told him:

(( وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنَّهَا لَتَعْدِلُ ثُلُثَ الْقُرْآنِ ))

*"By the One in whose Hand lies my soul, indeed it is equivalent to one third of the Qur'aan."*<sup>20</sup>

Aboo Sa'eed also stated that on one occasion Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) asked his companions, "Isn't any of you able to recite one third of the Qur'aan in a single night?" Because they found this difficult, they replied, "Who among us is able to do that, O Messenger of Allaah?" He said:

(( اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الصَّمَدُ ثُلُثَ الْقُرْآنِ ))

*"Allaah the Unique, the Self-Sufficient is one third of the Qur'aan."*<sup>21</sup>

Some scholars explained that the verses of the Qur'aan were revealed regarding three basic elements: laws, promises and warnings, and Allaah's Names and Attributes. The following narration supports this interpretation:<sup>22</sup>

Abu-Dardaa related that Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

(( إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ جَزَأَ الْقُرْآنَ ثَلَاثَةَ أَجْزَاءٍ فَجَعَلَ قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ جُزْأً مِنْ أَجْزَاءِ الْقُرْآنِ ))

*"Indeed, Allaah Most Great and Glorious, divided the Qur'aan into three parts and made "Say: He Allaah is Unique," one of the parts of the Qur'aan."*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Sahih Al Bukhari*, vol. 6, p. 438, no. 5013, Kitaab: Fadaa'il al Qur'aan; Baab: Fadl Qul Huwa llaahu ahad.5013.

<sup>21</sup> *Sahih Al Bukhari*, vol. 6, p. 438-439, no. 5015, Kitaab: Fadaa'il al Qur'aan; Baab: Fadl Qul Huwa llaahu ahad.5015.

<sup>22</sup> *Al-Jaami' li Ahkaam al-Qur'aan*, vol. 20, p. 190.

<sup>23</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 2, p. 387, no. 1770, Kitaab: Salaatul musaafireena wa qasruhaa; Baab: Fadl qiraa'at Qul Huwa llaahu ahad.1770.

#### 4. Daily Protection

‘Abdullaah ibn Khubayb said, “While we were waiting for the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) to lead us in prayer, it became dark and we became thirsty. When he finally came out, he took me by the hand and said, “Say!” Then he was silent for a moment. Then he said again, “Say!” So I asked, “What should I say?” He said, “Say: *He, Allaah, is Unique, and the two chapters of refuge three times whenever the evening comes and whenever the morning arrives. They will suffice you twice per day.*”<sup>24</sup> In another narration he was reported to have said, “*They will suffice you against anything.*”<sup>25</sup>

#### 5. A Night Prayer

‘Aa’ishah narrated that whenever the Prophet (ﷺ) went to bed at night, he would cup his palms together, blow in them and recite into them, “Say: He, Allaah, is Unique,” “Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Dawn,” and “Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of humankind.” Then he would wipe [his hands on] whatever he could reach of his body, beginning with his head, face and the front of his body. He would do all of this three times.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Sunan Abee Daawood*, vol. 3, no. 957, Kitaab: Fee Abwaab an-Nawm, Baab: Maa yaqoolu ithaa asbah and *Sunan at-Tirmithe*, vol. 3, no. 182, Kitaab: ad-Da’awaat, Baab: Raqm 7.

<sup>25</sup> *Sunan an-Nasaa’ee*, vol. 8, no. 251, Kitaab: Fil-Isti’aathah.

<sup>26</sup> *Sahih Al Bukhari*, vol. 6, p. 439, no. 5017, Kitaab: Fadaa’il al Qur’aan; Baab: Fadl al mu’awwathaat.

**Soorah al-Ikhlaas (112)**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the Name of Allaah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful*

﴿قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ﴾

**1. Say: “He is Allaah, (the) Unique.”**

﴿قُلْ﴾

“Say:...” This chapter describing Allaah begins with a command to the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) to convey the contents of the chapter to the pagans who asked him to tell them about his God’s lineage. According to Ibn al-Qayyim, it is also affirmation of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) position of being only a conveyer, a messenger, one only speaking what he was commanded to say.<sup>27</sup> He had no control over the revelation with regard to its content or to its time or place of revelation.

﴿هُوَ﴾

“He...” The description begins by referring to God using the third person singular pronoun “he” as is found in the Bible and other religious texts. With the rise of feminism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the question of God’s gender became an issue and attempts were made to rewrite the Bible free from “gender-bias”. Muslims did not fall into this trap because the Arabic Qur’aanic text could not be changed. In the case of the Christian Bible, according to researchers, there are over 5,000 manuscripts of the Gospels, no two agreeing with each other in all details. Thus, the Gospels are taught in the translations and not in their original languages. The Qur’aan, on the other hand, has remained unchanged over the past 1,400 years and all manuscripts agree on a single text. Muslim scholars clarified that God was neither male nor female. The neuter pronoun “it” was not used because it does not exist in Arabic or Hebrew. In Arabic everything, whether living and non-living, is

<sup>27</sup> Badaa’i‘ at-Tafseer, vol. 5, p. 367.

either referred to using male or female pronouns and adjectives. God communicated His final message in Arabic and chose the male pronoun over the female pronoun because males have always led society, with very few historical exceptions, and they represent authority.

﴿ٱللَّهُ﴾

“Allaah,” “Allaah” is the name of the Lord, the Exalted. It is said that it is the Greatest Name of Allaah, because it is referred to when describing Allaah by His various Attributes. For example:

﴿هُوَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلِمْ ٱلْغَيْبِ وَٱلشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ ٱلرَّحْمٰنُ ٱلرَّحِىْمُ﴾

“He is Allaah, besides whom none has the right to be worshipped, the All-Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

﴿هُوَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ٱلْمَلِكُ ٱلْقُدُّوسُ ٱلسَّلَامُ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُ ٱلْمُهَيْمِنُ ٱلْعَزِىْزُ ٱلْجَبَّارُ ٱلْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحٰنَ ٱللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ﴾

“He is Allaah besides whom none has the right to be worshipped, the King, the Holy, the One Free from all defects, the Giver of security, the Watcher over His creatures, the All-Mighty, the Compeller, the Supreme. Glory be to Allaah! He is above all that they associate as partners with Him.

﴿هُوَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْخَلِىْقُ ٱلْبَارِئُ ٱلْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ ٱلْأَسْمَآءُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُٗ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَزِىْزُ ٱلْحَكِىْمُ﴾

“He is Allaah, the Creator, the Inventor of all things, the Bestower of forms. To Him belong the Best Names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorify Him. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.” (Soorah al-Hashr, 59: 22-24)

Thus, Allaah mentioned several of His other Names as Attributes for His Name Allaah.<sup>28</sup> It is a proper name denoting the true God who exists necessarily, by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection. Some lexicologists held that it was a contraction of *al-Ilaah* (the God) for ease of pronunciation.<sup>29</sup>



**“The Uniquely One.”** As a title, *al-Ahad* is only applicable to Allaah and it signifies, He who has always been one and alone; or the indivisible; or He who has no other to share in His Lordship, nor in His Essence, nor in His Attributes.<sup>30</sup> Though both the terms *ahad* and *waahid* mean basically “one”, there is a subtle difference between the two in usage and meaning. For example, one would not say: *rajulun ahadun* (meaning: one man) but one says: *rajulun waahidun*.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, when one says: *maa fil-bayti ahadun* (there is no one in the house) it absolutely negates the possibility of anyone being present. However, if one says: *maa fil-bayti waahidun* (there is not one in the house), a clarification can be added *bal ithnayn* (but two)<sup>32</sup> as it does not necessarily negate absolutely. When one uses the term “one” with regard to any aspect of creation, it does not negate the possibility of other similar ones existing, whether in the past, present or in the future. On the other hand, when the term “one” is used in regard to God, it means one like which there is no other.

This first verse represents Allaah’s Own Affirmation of His Unique Monotheism, His inimitable Unity. Thus, the first verse is, first and foremost, a command to the Prophet (ﷺ) and whoever reads or recites the verse to affirm Allaah’s Unique Unity. Secondly, if a person says *qul huwAllaahu ahad* he has affirmed Allaah’s unity using Allaah’s Own Words.<sup>33</sup> The greatest possible way to affirm the Divine Unique Unity.

Having understood Allaah’s Unique Unity, one should understand how Allaah is to be worshipped in the light of that Unity. Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned that for every one of Allaah’s Attributes there is a particular act of worship caused and necessitated by that particular Attribute. Therefore, the aspect of the basic

<sup>28</sup> *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 1, p. 65.

<sup>29</sup> *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 83.

<sup>30</sup> *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 83.

<sup>31</sup> *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 83.

<sup>32</sup> *Rawaa’i‘ at-Tafseer*, vol. 2, p. 665.

<sup>33</sup> *Badaa’i‘ at-Tafseer*, vol. 5, p. 367.



Islaamic creed known as *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* is realized by maintaining Allaah's Uniqueness in all acts of worship associated with Him. Thus, the question often directed to Muslims by idolaters, as to how they are able to worship God without seeing Him or a representation of Him, addresses the violation of Allaah's Uniqueness. If He can be visualized in terms of His creation, He is no longer unique. If He becomes incarnate as Christians believe regarding Jesus and Hindus believe regarding god-men called *avatars*, He is no longer unique. Also, He is worshipped without intermediaries since the belief in intermediaries reduces God to the level of His creation. All form of intermediaries are rejected in Islaamic belief. Whether they are idols, as the pagan Makkans did with believing that the idols would bring them closer to God, as the Almighty said:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ﴾

**“Those who take gods besides Him (say): ‘We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allaah.’” (Soorah az-Zumar, 39: 3)**

Or whether they are saints, angels or even Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), intermediation is fundamentally rejected by the Qur'aan and the *Sunnah* (way) of the Prophet (ﷺ) as understood by his companions and the righteous generations which followed them.

The Trinitarian belief of Christians wherein God is likened to an egg comprised of three parts (shell, white and yolk), or water existing in three states (liquid, solid and gas), or a tree possessing three elements (roots, trunk, and branches) violates Allaah's Unique Unity.

Consequently, Allaah is to be worshipped through His Attributes and not through His creation in any way shape or form. The case of worship in the direction of the Ka'bah has to be clarified, as it is sometimes equated with the worship of idols, or as some Hindus believe, it contains one of their idols called *Siva-lingam*. That is why Allaah stated regarding the direction of prayer:

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

**“The east and west belong to Allaah, so wherever you turn you face Allaah.”**

(Soorah al-Baqarah, 2: 115)

Furthermore, it is well known in the Sharee‘ah that you may face any direction during prayer if you cannot determine the direction of the Ka‘bah.